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# Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, & Children

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE / FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE / WASHINGTON, D.C.  
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The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides specified nutritious supplemental foods to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and to infants and children up to their fifth birthday who are determined by competent professionals (physicians, nutritionists, nurses, and other health officials) to be at "nutritional risk" because of inadequate nutrition and inadequate income. Funds are made available to participating State health departments or comparable State agencies; to Indian tribes, bands or groups recognized by the Department of the Interior or their authorized representative or to the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. These agencies distribute funds to the participating local agencies. These funds are used to provide specified supplemental foods to WIC participants and to pay specified administrative costs, including those for nutrition education.

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## WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS?

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Infants, children, and pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding women are eligible for the WIC Program if they: (1) reside in an approved project area or are a member of a special population; (2) meet the income eligibility standards of the local agency; and (3) are individually determined by a competent professional to be in nutritional need of the supplemental foods provided by the WIC Program. A person is determined in nutritional need for such reasons as anemia, abnormal growth, high-risk pregnancy, and inadequate diet. When a local agency no longer has funds to serve additional participants, applicants are placed in one of six nutritional need priority levels in order to assure that those persons in greatest need are placed on the WIC Program as soon as space is available.

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## WHAT SUPPLEMENTAL FOODS DO THE PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE?

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Under the WIC Program, infants receive iron-fortified formula, cereal which is high in iron, and fruit juice which is high in vitamin C. Infants 6 months of age or older may receive fortified whole fluid milk or fortified evaporated milk in lieu of iron-fortified infant formula. Participating women and children receive fortified milk and/or cheese, eggs, hot or cold cereal which is high in iron, and fruit or vegetable juice which is high in vitamin C. Children with special dietary problems may receive iron-fortified infant formula by request of the physician.

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## HOW DO PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE SUPPLEMENTAL FOODS?

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WIC participants receive foods from a food delivery system operated by their State agency, which is responsible for the accountability of the system and its effectiveness in meeting their needs. Systems the State agencies use are: (1) retail purchase systems in which participants obtain sup-

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plemental foods through local retail stores; (2) home delivery systems in which food is delivered to the participant's home; and (3) direct distribution systems in which participants pick up food from a storage facility.

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#### HOW ARE LOCAL AGENCIES SELECTED?

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Each State agency must rank areas and special populations under its jurisdiction in order of greatest need based on economic and health statistics and approve new programs in this rank order. When funds are available to open a WIC Program in an area, the State agency selects a local agency based on the type of service and capabilities of the agency. Consideration is given to each agency in the following order: (1) a health agency which can provide both health and administrative services; (2) a health or welfare agency which must contract with another agency for health or administrative services; (3) a health agency which must contract with a private physician in order to provide health services to a particular category of participant (women, infants, or children); and (4) a welfare agency which must contract with a private physician in order to provide health services.

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#### WHAT RECOURSE DOES A PERSON HAVE FOR ANY ADVERSE DECISION WITHIN THE WIC PROGRAM?

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Each State agency is required to have a fair hearing procedure under which pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, parents, or guardians can appeal any decision made by the local agency regarding program participation.

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